

FUTURE FISHERIES IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM WINTER 2015 FUNDING CYCLE

Decision Notice and Response to Public Comment

Prepared by
Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks
March 13, 2015

Proposal and Final Action

Members of the Future Fisheries Review Panel submitted funding recommendations for 18 of 19 proposed projects from the 2015 winter funding cycle of the Future Fisheries Improvement Program (FFIP) to the Montana Fish & Wildlife Commission (Commission) for final approval. The Future Fisheries Review Panel is an independent board appointed by the governor (87-1-273, MCA). As a final action, the Commission adopted all of the funding recommendations, as submitted by the Future Fisheries Review Panel, at their public meeting held in Helena on March 12, 2015.

The Future Fisheries Improvement Program was established in 1995 to establish and implement a statewide voluntary program that promotes fishery habitats and spawning areas for the rivers, streams, and lakes of Montana's fisheries in order to enhance future fisheries through natural reproduction (87-1-272, MCA).

Montana Environmental Policy Act (MEPA)

MEPA requires Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks (FWP) to assess the potential consequences of the proposed action for the human and natural environment. Environmental Assessments (EAs) were prepared and released by FWP on January 15 or 16, 2015 for eight individual proposed projects associated with the winter 2015 Future Fisheries funding cycle. The 32-day public comment period ended February 16 or 17. These proposed projects included:

Douglas Creek fish ladders
Moores Creek grazing and water quality enhancement
Mulherin Creek fish screen
Shanley Creek restoration
Stonewall Creek restoration
Theodore Creek fish passage improvement
West Fork Jacobsen Spring Creek restoration
Yukon Creek fish passage improvement

The remaining 10 projects funded by Commission approval fell either under a categorical exclusion (defined under ARM), the federal National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), or ongoing/pending FWP processes.

Categorical exclusion:

Bitterroot River riparian fencing
Bull River riparian restoration
T&Y Diversion fish screen repair

NEPA / other processes:

Barker-Hugesville fish barrier
Deep Creek riparian habitat and streamflow improvement
French Gulch channel relocation
Mussellshell River Egge diversion removal
Ruby Creek channel relocation
Upper Lolo Creek sediment reduction
Upper Sleeping Child/Rye Creek sediment reduction

Summary of Public Comment

The following is a summary of comments received from eight drafted EA's, as well as associated responses from FWP.

The State Historical Preservation Office commented that a cultural survey should be conducted on the Shanley Creek project, that a cultural survey on the Douglas Creek project is unwarranted, and that coordination of cultural efforts with the U.S. Forest Service should take place regarding the Stonewall Creek, Yukon Creek, and Theodore Creek projects. The recommended cultural surveys are underway and will be completed prior to project initiation.

Decision Notice

The public comment period closed on the above projects, and the only comments received addressed the need for cultural surveys. Based on the EA's disclosure and analysis of potential impacts, FWP concludes that the proposed action will not result in any significant impacts. For the eight projects listed above, FWP will adopt the draft EA as the final EA and proceed with the projects as planned. Copies of the final EA's are available upon request.

Thank you for your interest,



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